

What is STARS?

The SStep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is Vermont’s quality rating system for **child care, preschool, and afterschool programs**. Choosing the right program is one of the most important choices you’ll make. But it’s not a decision you have to make alone. Parents can look for STARS as one indicator of quality.

Why quality is important

Watching your child grow is an amazing experience. Children’s bodies and brains grow quickly. A child care, preschool, or afterschool program is second only to your home as the place your child will develop and grow. Quality programs help ensure a good foundation for the present and the future of your child.



What do the STARS mean?

Any program that is part of STARS has gone above and beyond what the state requires of them. The more stars a program has, the more successful it has been, but even one star shows you that a program has made the extra effort to offer your child a better experience. STARS rewards child care, preschool, and afterschool programs when they make their programs better.

Community partners

The SStep Ahead Recognition System is a public-private partnership created and led by the Child Development Division of the Vermont Department for Children & Families. The partnership recognizes the essential role played by the STARS program and national accreditation in improving the quality of child care, preschool, and afterschool programs in our communities. Building Bright Futures and IBM provide private statewide support for the STARS program through monetary funding and other donations.* For more information on quality programs and community partners, visit our website and click on “Community.”

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To learn more:



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www.STARSstepahead.org

3/08



An Introduction for Parents



to the SStep Ahead Recognition System for child care, preschool and afterschool programs

www.STARSstepahead.org



★ **One-star programs** may be fairly new or just starting on a path of improvement.

★★ **Two-star programs** may have made some progress in many areas or more progress in one or two areas.

★★★ **Three-star programs** are solid and working to reach specific goals. They either have made substantial progress in two or three areas or have made some improvements across all five areas.

★★★★ **Four-star programs** are strong and have documented quality in all five areas. Many four-star programs are also nationally accredited.

★★★★★ **Five-star programs** are outstanding in all five areas. Many five-star programs are also nationally accredited.



How does STARS indicate quality?

STARS programs document their quality in one or more of five areas:

- Licensing standards
- Curriculum and activities
- Training and education
- Families and communities
- Business practices

How can I use STARS to find a program for my child?

Finding programs that are participating in STARS and then visiting is a great way to begin your search.

Finding the right match for your needs and your child is essential.

You can go to the STARS website (www.STARSstepahead.org) and/or contact your local child care referral agency to find a local STARS program.

Contact information for your local referral agency can be found at the STARS website or by calling 1-800-649-2642.



There are STARS providers in every county in Vermont, with more joining all the time. You can go to the STARS website (www.STARSstepahead.org) and/or contact your local child care referral agency to find a local STARS program.

